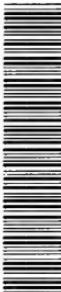


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The future of India



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THE UTURE OF INDIA

ESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

TO THE
IAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

BY
Sir S. P. SINHA

ON THE
27th December, 1915.



LONDON:
JAS. TRUSCOTT & SON, LTD.

1915.

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FUTURE OF INDIA

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE Address now published was delivered by Sir Satyendra Sinha, as President of the Indian National Congress, at Bombay in December, 1915.

The Indian National Congress is an Association of independent politicians, Indian and British, whose objects are the progressive advance of India towards a system of Government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing units of the British Empire, and its participation, on terms of equality, in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire. The Congress seeks to achieve these objects by steadily advocating liberalising changes in the existing system of administration and by promoting national unity, fostering public spirit and developing and organising the intellectual, moral, economic and industrial resources of the country. The Congress is now in the thirty-first year of its existence.

A President is elected annually whose function it is to preside at the annual meeting of the Congress. Sir S. Sinha was President for 1915. He is a Bengali by birth and is distinguished as being the first Indian to serve on the Viceroy's Executive Council. By profession he is a Barrister, and as Advocate-General for Bengal, is the head of the Calcutta Bar. In politics he is remarkable for his independence. As his address shows, his views are neither unreasonably conservative nor irrationally extreme. He represents, in fact, the moderate element among Indian reformers. Though his goal is self-government within the Empire he, as a practical man, recognises that India would not gain but lose by making the strides in that direction too long or by taking them too rapidly.

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THE FUTURE OF INDIA.

Brother Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen—
My first duty to-day is again to lay at the feet of our august and beloved Sovereign our unswerving fealty, our unshaken allegiance, and our enthusiastic homage. His Majesty has been with our soldiers on the battle-field. His son shares with them all the hardships of war. And we desire to express our gratitude to Almighty God for shielding our beloved Emperor and enabling him to endure with fortitude the physical suffering inseparable from his recent accident and restoring him to a devoted people in renewed health and strength. Long may he live to lead his people and promote their happiness and prosperity.

The question which, above all others, is engrossing our minds at the present moment is the War, and the supreme feeling which arises in our minds is one of deep admiration for the self-imposed burden which England's bearing in the

struggle for liberty and freedom, and a feeling of profound pride that India has not fallen behind other portions of the British Empire, but has stood shoulder to shoulder with them by the side of the Imperial Mother in the hour of her sorest trial. In the great galaxy of heroes, in the imperishable Roll of Honour, there are now, and there will never cease to be, beloved Indian names testifying to the fact that our people would rather die unsullied than outlive the disgrace of surrender to a bastard civilisation. Our conviction is firm that, by the guidance of that divine spirit which shapes the destiny of nations, the cause of right will ultimately prevail and the close of the struggle will usher in a new era in the history of the human race.

My next duty is to convey our unstinted admiration and our heartfelt gratitude to those of our brethren who have been shedding their blood in the battle-fields of Europe, Asia and Africa, in defence of the Empire. The War has given India an opportunity, as nothing else could have done, of demonstrating the courage, bravery and tenacity of her troops, even when

pitted against the best organised armies of the world, and also the capacity of her sons of all classes, creeds and nationalities to rise as one people under the stimulus of an overpowering emotion. That the wave of loyalty which has swept over India has touched the hearts of all classes has been ungrudgingly admitted even by unfriendly critics. The Bengalee is just as anxious to fight under the banner of his Majesty the King-Emperor as the Sikh and the Pathan, and those of them to whom an opportunity has been given to serve either in ambulance, postal or despatch work, have shown as great a disregard of danger and devotion to duty as others employed in the more arduous work of fighting. India has risen to the occasion, and her princes and peoples have vied with each other in rallying round the imperial standard at a time when the enemies of the Empire counted on disaffection and internal troubles. The spectacle affords a striking proof as much of the wisdom of those statesmen who have in recent years guided the destiny of the British Empire in India as of the fitness of the Indian people to grasp the dignity and the responsibilities of citizenship of a

world-wide Empire. Nor must we forget to tender to the families of those who have laid down their lives in the glorious cause our sincere and respectful sympathy.

Brother Delegates—Doubts have been expressed in some quarters as to the wisdom of the Congress assembling while the War is still going on. It has been suggested that discussion of political problems might be mis-construed as an attempt to advance individual national interests at a time of Imperial stress. I do not think that such apprehensions are well-founded. If we had any doubt as to the ultimate success of England, we might well hesitate to discuss questions which can only arise after the War is over and peace is concluded. We want to make it perfectly clear that there is no one among us willing to cause the slightest embarrassment to the Government. We seek to make no capital out of the service so ungrudgingly rendered by our countrymen to the Empire. There is not, I trust, a single person in our camp who expects reforms as the price or the reward of our loyalty. That loyalty would indeed be a poor thing if it proceeded from a lively sense of favours to come.

Nor could any serious and responsible Indian publicist advocate that as the result of the War, there should be a sudden and violent breakage in the evolution of political institutions in India. The problem before us is how, without asking for any violent departure from the line of constitutional development which far-sighted statesmen—English and Indian—desire for India, we can still press for a substantial advance towards the development of free institutions in this country. It is our earnest hope that the spontaneous outburst of loyalty throughout the country has dispelled for ever all sense of distrust and suspicion between us and our rulers, and that, after the War is over, British officials will consider it their duty not so much to administer our affairs efficiently as to train the people themselves to administer them, and that, with this change of spirit, the people will also begin to look upon these officials as zealous co-adjutors in the task of their political self-development. This brings me naturally to what has been a burning topic in the Congress for many years, which has led to bitter differences and fierce dissensions, and with re-

gard to which you are entitled to ask my views—our political ideal, our duties in the present, and our prospects in the future.

OUR IDEAL—SELF-GOVERNMENT.

What, to begin with should be the political ideal of India? To some, the raising of the question may seem to be unnecessary and at best academic and, to others, positively mischievous. To me, however, it seems that the greatest danger in the path of the future well-being of the country is the want of such a reasoned ideal of our future as would satisfy the aspirations and ambitions of the rising generations of India and at the same time meet with the approval of those to whose hands our destinies are committed. It is my belief that a rational and inspiring ideal will arrest the insidious and corrupting influence of the real enemies of our Motherland, even if it is not able to root out from the land that malignant mental disease which has been called anarchism and whose psychology it is so difficult to analyse. It must be obvious to all sincere and impartial judges that no mandate whether of the Government or

of the Congress will be able to still the throbbing pain in the soul of awakening India, unless the ideal which is held up by the Congress and accepted by the Government commends itself first to the heart and then to the head. It seems to me that the only satisfactory form of self-Government to which India aspires cannot be anything short of what President Lincoln so pithily described as “government of the people, for the people, and by the people.”

When I say this, I do not for one moment imply that the British Government is not the best Government we have had for ages. We have only to look round to see the manifold blessings which have been brought to this country by that Government. But as a British Premier early in this century very truly observed, “good government cannot be a substitute for self-Government.” Says a recent writer in a well-known British periodical : “Every Englishman is aware that on no account, not if he were to be governed by an angel from heaven, would he surrender that most sacred of all his rights, the right of making his own laws. . . . He would not be an

Englishman, he would not be able to look English fields and trees in the face, if he had parted with that right. Laws in themselves have never counted for much. There have been beneficent despots and wise law-givers in all ages who have increased the prosperity and probably the contentment and happiness of their subjects, but yet their government has not stimulated the moral and intellectual capacity latent in citizenship or fortified its character or enlarged its understanding. There is more hope for the future of mankind in the least and faintest impulse towards self-help, self-realisation, self-redemption than in any of the laws that Aristotle ever dreamt of." The ideal, therefore, of self-government is one that is not based merely on emotion and sentiment, but on the lessons of history.

I believe in all sincerity that such has been the ideal which the British Government itself has entertained and cherished almost from the commencement of British rule in India. Generations of statesmen have repeatedly laid down that policy, solemn declarations of successive sovereigns have graciously endorsed it, and Acts

of Parliament have given it legislative sanction.

As late as the 8th day of October this year, his Excellency the Viceroy, addressing a large number of representative officials at the United Service Club of Simla, said :

“ England has instilled into this country the culture and civilisation of the West with all its ideals of liberty and self-respect. It is not enough for her now to consider only the material outlook of India. It is necessary for her to cherish the aspirations, of which she has herself sown the seed, and English officials are gradually awakening to the fact that high as were the aims and remarkable the achievements of their predecessors, a still nobler task lies before them in the present and the future in guiding the uncertain and faltering steps of Indian development along sure and safe paths. The new role of guide, philosopher and friend is opening before you and it is worthy of your greatest efforts. It requires in you gifts of imagination and sympathy, and imposes upon you self-sacrifice, for it means that slowly but surely you must divest yourselves of some of the

power you have hitherto wielded. Let it be realised that great as has been England's mission in the past, she has a far more glorious task to fulfil in the future, in encouraging and guiding the political self-development of the people. The goal to which India may attain is still distant and there may be many vicissitudes in her path, but I look forward with confidence to a time when, strengthened by character and self-respect and bound by ties of affection and gratitude, India may be regarded as a true friend of the Empire and not merely as a trusty dependent. The day for the complete fulfilment of this ideal is not yet, but it is to this distant vista that the British official should turn his eyes, and he must grasp the fact that it is by this future success in this direction that British prestige and efficiency will be judged."

Those noble words of Lord Hardinge, which must still be ringing in our ears, are not the idle speculations of an irresponsible enthusiast, but the well-considered pronouncement of a statesman who, after guiding the ship of state during a period of unprecedented storm and stress,

sends forth this message both to his own countrymen and to us. Lest there be any among us of so little faith as to doubt the real meaning of those memorable words, or any Englishman inclined to whittle down the meaning of this promise, I hope there will be an authentic and definite proclamation with regard to which there will be no evasion or misunderstanding possible. So far as we are concerned, there is no real reason for mistrust, for this policy proclaimed so long ago and repeated so recently has been fruitful of innumerable beneficent results. Officials, even the highest, may sometimes have spoken or even acted in a different spirit, but England always did and does still consider it her glorious mission to raise this once great country from her fallen position to her ancient status among the nations of the earth, and she enjoins every English official in India to consider himself as a trustee bound to make over his charge to the rightful owner the moment the latter attains to years of discretion.

But are there any among us who, while accepting his Excellency's message of hope, are

disposed to demur to the qualification therein expressed, namely, that the goal is not yet? If so, I do not hesitate to express my entire disagreement, because I would sooner take the risk of displeasing than injuring my countrymen. I am fortified in my opinion when I find that almost every prominent leader of the Congress has laboured to impress upon all true lovers of our country that the path is long and devious and that we shall have to tread weary steps before we get to the promised land. "Day will not break the sooner because we get up before the twilight." The end will not come by impatience. I maintain that no true friend of India will place the ideal of self-government before us without this necessary qualification. It inevitably makes passionate youth anxious to avoid the steep and weary path, take to dangerous and even fatal short-cuts, for it is undoubtedly true that impetuous youth finds it is easier to die for a glorious ideal than to live and work for it with steady patience and persistent self-sacrifice. I yield to none in my desire for self-Government, but I recognise that there is a wide gulf between desire and attainment.

WHAT THE CONGRESS WANTS.

When I accepted my nomination for this chair I knew—as all of you must have known—that I was not likely to be able to suggest any specific measures of reform other than those so long advocated by this Congress. But I felt—I trust without undue presumption—that having been in the inner Councils of the Government for, however, short a time, it was peculiarly my duty to act as your spokesman on this occasion. It is in that belief that I appeal to the British nation to declare their ungrudging approval of the goal to which we aspire and their inflexible resolution to equip India for her journey to that goal and to furnish her escort on the long and weary road. Such a declaration will be the most distinguished way of making their appreciation of India's services and sacrifices—her loyalty and her devotion to the Empire. Such a declaration will touch the heart and appeal to the imagination of the people far more than any mere specific political reforms. These latter may fall short of the high expectations raised by utterances of respon-

sible English statesmen as to the future place of India in the Empire and cause general disappointment. But an authoritative declaration of policy on the lines I suggest will, without causing such disappointment, carry conviction to the minds of the people that the pace of administrative reforms will be reasonably accelerated and that henceforth it will be only a question of patient preparation. The most appropriate opportunity for such a declaration will be the moment when the victory of England and her Allies will establish for ever the triumph of free institutions over old-world doctrines of military absolutism.

Let me not say that all that is wanted, all that would satisfy us, is a mere declaration of policy; what I do say is that there should be a frank and full statement of the policy of Government as regards the future of India, so that hope may come where doubt spreads its darkening shadow, and that steps should be taken to move towards self-government by the gradual development of popular control over all departments of Government and by the removal of disabilities and restrictions under

which we labour both in our country and in other parts of the British Empire.

I have great pleasure in availing myself of this opportunity to acknowledge with gratitude two recent measures which, though not exactly steps towards self-government, amount to some recognition of India's place in the Empire. The first, thanks to the statesmanlike efforts of Lord Hardinge, is the partial amelioration of the condition of Indian emigrants in South Africa and the other is the acceptance by Lord Hardinge's Government of my friend the Hon. Mr. Shafi's resolution for an official representation of India at the Imperial Conference. I would, however, venture to suggest that in addition to the official representative, one or two of the Indian Princes who have rendered such conspicuous service to the Empire might fittingly represent the great Continent of India. The delegation of one or two distinguished Indian Chiefs to the Imperial Conference will, in addition to other honors no doubt in store for them, be a just recognition of their pre-eminent services and will gratify public opinion throughout the length and breadth of India.

Coming to domestic politics, I do not think it necessary that I should on the present occasion deal in detail with the various concrete measures which the Congress advocates as an effective advance towards self-government on lines suited to India's special requirements. A decisive advance towards provincial autonomy, the liberalisation of the Council Regulations, establishment of elective as opposed to non-official majorities, an increase of their powers of control specially in regard to finance, a larger representation of Indians in the various executive Councils as also in the Council of the Secretary of State, the admission of larger numbers of Indians to all the higher branches of the public services, the long delayed separation of judicial and executive functions, the expansion of primary, scientific and technical education, the abolition of indentured labour and the improvement of the position of Indians in other parts of the Empire—these are reforms which have long been urged and will be dealt with by you so far as you think necessary. I am afraid, however, most of them must stand over for adjustment till peace is in sight. I will content

myself with dealing as shortly as I can with three specific matters which have become increasingly urgent and with regard to which there is a practical unanimity of opinion. They are :

Firstly—The question of commissions in the army and military training for the people. Secondly—The extension of local self-government. Thirdly—The development of our commerce, industries and agriculture.

COMMISSIONS IN THE ARMY AND MILITARY TRAINING.

'There can be no true sense of citizenship where there is no sense of responsibility for the defence of one's own country. " If there is trouble, others will quiet it down. If there is riot, others will subdue it. If there is danger, others will face it. If our country is in peril, others will defend it." When a people feel like this, it indicates that they have got to a stage when all sense of civic responsibility has been crushed out of them, and the system which is responsible for this feeling is inconsistent with the self-respect of normal human beings.

I shall be the first to acknowledge that various steps have been and are being taken by the Government to promote the right spirit of self-help in the country, but I feel that hitherto the Government has not only ignored but has put positive obstacles in the way of the people acquiring or retaining a spirit of national self-help in this the most essential respect.

For what is the present condition of things in this respect. Except certain warlike races like the Sikhs and Rajputs, the people generally are debarred from receiving any kind of military training. Not only are they not allowed enlistment in the ranks of His Majesty's Army, but they are even precluded from joining any volunteer corps. Even with regard to the classes of men—Sikhs and Rajputs, Gurkhas and Pathans, etc.—who are taken into the regular army for the simple reason that the number of English troops is not in itself sufficient to maintain peace and order in this country—it is an inflexible rule that though they may now obtain the highest badge of valour, viz., the Victoria Cross, not one of them can receive a Commission

in His Majesty's Army—irrespective of birth or bravery, education or efficiency.

While the humblest European and even the West Indian Negro has the right to carry arms, the law of the land denies even to the most law-abiding and respectable Indian the privilege of possessing or carrying arms of any description except as a matter of special concession and indulgence, often depending on the whim and caprice of unsympathetic officials. To my mind the mere statement of the present system ought to be sufficient to secure its condemnation. Let me proceed to state shortly what changes we consider essential to remedy this state of things. Firstly—We ask for the right to enlist in the regular army, irrespective of race or province of origin, but subject only to prescribed tests of physical fitness. Secondly—We ask that the commissioned ranks of the Indian Army should be thrown open to all classes of His Majesty's subjects, subject to fair, reasonable and adequate physical and educational tests, and that a military college or colleges should be established in India where proper military training can be received by those of our countrymen who will

have the good fortune to receive His Majesty's Commission. Thirdly—We ask that all classes of His Majesty's subjects should be allowed to join as volunteers, subject of course to such rules and regulations as will ensure proper control and discipline; and, fourthly, that the invidious distinctions under the Arms Act should be removed. This has no real connection with the three previous claims, but I deal with it together with the others as all these disabilities are justified on the same ground of political expedience.

I take leave to point out, that it is not correct, at any rate at the present time, to assert of any sections of the Indian people that they are wanting in such physical courage and manly virtues as to render them incapable of bearing arms. But even if it were so, is it not the obvious duty of England so to train them as to remove this incapacity, as they are trying to remove so many others, especially if it be the case, as there is some reason to believe it is, that it is English rule which has brought them to such a pass? England has ruled this country for considerably over 150 years now, and surely it cannot be a matter of pride to her at the

end of this period that the withdrawal of her rule would mean chaos and anarchy and would have the country an easy prey to any foreign adventurers. There are some of our critics who never fail to remind us that if the English were to leave the country to-day, we would have to wire to them to come back before they got to Aden. Some even enjoy the grim joke that were the English to withdraw now, there would be neither a rupee nor a virgin left in some parts of the country. I can conceive of no more scathing indictment of the results of British Rule. A superman might gloat over the spectacle of the conquest of might over justice and righteousness, but I am much mistaken if the British nation, fighting now as ever for the cause of justice and freedom and liberty, will consider it as other than discreditable to itself that after nearly two centuries of British Rule, India has been brought to-day to the same emasculated condition as the Britons were in the beginning of the 5th century when the Roman legions left the English shores in order to defend their own country against the Huns, Goths and other barbarian hordes.

In asking, therefore, for the right of military training, we are seeking to remedy the results above described. We are seeking to regain our lost self-respect, to strengthen our sense of civic responsibility, and to regain the right to defend our homes and hearths against possible invaders, should the strong protecting arm of England be ever withdrawn from our country. It is not mere sentiment that compels us to demand this inalienable right of all human beings, though sentiment has its undoubted place in the scheme of every government. Some day or other, our right arm may be called upon to defend all that man holds most precious. For who will venture to prophesy that sooner or later there may not be another such conflict as is now convulsing the world, when there may be new alliances and fresh combinations and when England may not have the same allies and advantages as she has now?

I have endeavoured to prove that neither of the objections which are generally put forward against our claims to enlistment in the army is tenable. I have also tried to show the justice as well as the necessity of our demands.

In the face of what has happened in the present war, it is no longer correct to say as Lord Bryce said in 1912—“To England, however, apart from the particular events which might have created the snapping of the tie and apart from the possible loss of a market, severance from India need involve no lasting injury. To be mistress of a vast country, whose resources for defence need to be supplemented by her own adds, indeed, to her fame, but does not add to her strength. England was great and powerful before she owned a yard of land in Asia, and might be great and powerful again with no more foothold in the East than would be needed for the naval prestige which protects her commerce.”

The resources for defence which India possesses even now do add to the strength of England as has been so amply proved in the present war. This strength would be multiplied a hundred-fold were our claims ever conceded. For, if the people of India are allowed and trained to bear arms, what nation is there whose strength would compare with that of England? Nor is there any reason for appreh-

hension that such concessions would be a source of internal danger. If the Sikhs, the Gurkhas, the Mahrattas and the Pathans—good and valiant soldiers as they are—are found to be loyal and law-abiding, there is no reason to think that the case would be otherwise with the other races when admitted to the same status and privileges. Beside the privileges are to be granted subject only to such conditions and rules and regulations as to ensure proper discipline and control.

In the case of Volunteers also, they will be similarly subject to all popular safeguards and restrictions which will be for the Government to lay down.

Subject to such safeguards, the ranks of volunteer corps will afford, without any risk whatever to the Government or the people, an outlet for restless energies which now find doubtful and dangerous channels.

In making these demands, I know I raise as large a question as the formation of a national militia. I desire frankly and freely to meet the criticism that such an army, with a preponderance of the Indian element may be turned

against the British Government. I venture to submit in reply that anarchists and seditionists may succeed in winning over an ignorant and mercenary army, but they will never succeed in winning over a truly national army, drawn from a people made increasingly loyal by the spread of education and liberal self-governing institutions. Of course, I am not suggesting that the army should be nationalised in a day any more than the government of the country should be nationalised by a stroke of the pen. But I urge in all humility that the time has come for making the beginning of a National Army in India. The tremendous shock with which every part of our world-wide Empire has realised the prime necessity of maintaining an army large enough for its defence and protection renders it imperative that a strong National Army should be raised and maintained in every part of India.

The opening of a military career will fire the imagination and stimulate the virility of India in a way that nothing else can do. And is it too much for India to expect to be treated in the same way as Russia treats her subject race

--especially after the proof she has given of the prowess of her sons and their devotion and loyalty to the Imperial standard?

Reason and convenience, justice and necessity, all support every one of the claims I have put forward; and if a definite advance is not made in these respects, it will be difficult to believe that the War has changed the *angle of visions* of our rulers. It will be impossible to retain faith in what was proclaimed by the present Premier "that the Empire rests, not upon predominance, artificial, of race or class, but upon the loyal affection of free communities built upon the basis of equal right."

I now come to the last but not the least important of our claims, viz., that the invidious distinctions under the Arms Act should be abolished. Sentiment as well as reason alike recommends it. Not only will the galling sense of racial inferiority and the overt imputation of universal disloyalty be removed by such a measure, but people will also get rid of onerous disabilities in the way of defending themselves against the attacks of wild animals as well as lawless human adversaries.

If ever we attain our goal of self-government, it will not be merely through the expansion of Legislative Councils and their powers, nor yet through the admission of more Indians to Executive Council or the establishment of a national militia, though all of them have no doubt their proper use and importance in the scheme of our national progress. It will come in a very great measure with the advance and development of local self-government. When people generally so far understand their civic rights and duties as to be able to manage their own communal business, their roads and drains, their tanks and wells, their schools and dispensaries, it will no longer be possible to keep them from controlling the higher work of administration. Indeed, it is not always possible to do the latter satisfactorily without having served a full term of apprenticeship in the former, and I cannot do better than remind you of what was said by Mrs. Besant in her address to the Congress last December, while supporting the resolution on Self-Government : "The training for self-government is of vital import to our nation to-day. For the government of

States is at once a science and an art; and in order that it may be worthily exercised, the lesson must be learnt in local self-government, then in provincial autonomy, and finally in the self-government of the nation for the work of governing is the most highly skilled profession upon earth. . . . What then should you do? You should take part in local government wherever it is possible. As it is, take it and practise it, for you will gain experience and you will gain knowledge; and only that experience and knowledge will guide you when you come to speak in large councils and to make your voice heard over vast areas. So I would plead to you to face this drudgery. It is drudgery, make no mistake; understand the details of local administration and understand how to manage your own drains, particularly your water-works. These are the alphabets of self-government; and unless you go through that drudgery, no amount of enthusiasm and love for the country will make your administration a success."

No less emphatic was the advice of our revered leader, Sir S. Iyer, as President of the Recep-

tion Committee of the last Congress. If this is the view of our leaders, the views of Government are no less clear. We need not go further back than the memorable Resolution of 1882 of Lord Ripon. You will remember what a generous scheme of local self-government was there laid down "to foster sedulously the small beginnings of independent political life." It will take me long, and it will hardly be profitable, to trace the history of the failure of that scheme. But I may be pardoned for pointing out that the failure was due neither to the Government of India, nor to the local Government, nor yet to the civil service in India but, so far at any rate as Bengal is concerned, to the whole framework of the scheme being changed by the Secretary of State for India in Council, in spite of the protests and objections of the authorities in this country.

Lord Ripon's Resolution laid down the following fundamental principles :

That the Local Governments should maintain throughout the country a network of Local Boards charged with definite duties and entrusted with definite funds.

That the jurisdiction of the Primary Boards should be so limited in area as to ensure both local knowledge and local interest on the part of each of the members.

That there should be a preponderance of non-official members to be chosen by election wherever possible.

That Government control on these bodies should be exercised from without rather than from within, non-official elected chairmen acting wherever practicable as chairmen of the Local Boards.

The Decentralisation Commission in their Report dealt with the matter at some length and also made some definite recommendations.

Lord Morley in his Reform Despatch, dated 27th November, 1908, said :—“The village in India has been the fundamental and indestructible unit of the social system surviving the downfall of dynasty after dynasty. I desire your Excellency to consider the best way of carrying out a policy that would make the village a starting point of public life.”

We have next the Resolution of Lord Hardinge’s Government, dated 1st May, 1915, deal-

ing with and assenting to many of the recommendations of the Decentralisation Commission. We are, therefore, in agreement with Government as to the importance of local self-government. It is a matter of further general agreement that the re-development of the village as an administrative unit has been brought within the range of practical politics by the spread of the co-operative movement. I find from the report of Sir E. Maclagan's Committee on Co-operation in India that primary societies have grown from 832 in 1906-7 to 14,566 in 1913-14, the number of members from 88,582 to 661,859, and the amount of working capital from nil to 46,427,842 rupees. The report states: "No one reading these figures can fail to be struck by the magnitude which the growth has already attained or to be convinced that the movement has taken firm root. Societies are now so spread over all parts of India, and the advantages which their members are obtaining are so patent that it is impossible to doubt that the movement will eventually attain dimensions compared to which its present size will appear negligible. As a consequence, there will un-

doubtedly arise through the medium of co-operation a powerful organisation formed of these agricultural classes, who are at present inarticulate through want of education and cohesion."

Local self-government, supplemented by the spread of the co-operative movement, will gradually solve many of our most difficult problems—such as primary education, small industries, improved agriculture, indebtedness of the peasantry, rural sanitation and so forth, and to this we must devote our best energies and attention in the immediate future, bearing in mind that we have got to build from the village upwards.

Here is a vast field in which we can in co-operation with the Government work heart and soul for the amelioration of the condition of the masses of our people. It has been forcibly pointed out by Sir Daniel Hamilton that the development of the co-operative movement in the villages requires thousands of men. The civilians who have been in charge of this movement have done wonders considering their numbers. They deserve the very highest praise, but

their numbers are far too few, 12,000 village banks seem a large number to have been started in 10 years, but at the same rate of progress, India will not have been covered with village banks for another 400 or 500 years. Is the great industry of India to wait all this time before it is provided with a banking system? Are the 250 millions of Indian cultivators to go on paying 30, 40, 50 per cent., for their finance for hundreds of years to come, while the rest of the civilised world gets all the money it wants at 3, 4 and 5 per cent.? What India wants is more men to develop co-operative credit and she must have them. The men are there, hundreds of them being turned out of her colleges every year with nothing to do, with nothing to look forward to. And every Indian will join in the expression of the hope that we shall soon see established in every province of India schools for the training in co-operative methods and co-operative finance of the best of India's young men, who will carry the co-operative flag into every village of India, and wage war on the darkness and the ignorance and the poverty which exist to-day and which are in a large

measure due to want of co-operation. In the same connection, Sir Theodore Morison has gathered from official reports highly interesting illustrations which Co-operative Credit Societies are giving to the self-culture of the people. In one instance, a man of middle age learnt to read and write solely to keep the accounts of the bank of which he was President, and, though his first efforts were painfully hard to decipher, he persevered to such good purpose that his books are now the best kept in the Punjab. In another village, the President and officers of the bank had acquired such influence that they had re-constituted the ancient authority of the village Panchyat for settling local disputes, with the result that litigation which had been the curse of the place before has now much decreased.

While I gratefully acknowledge the efforts now being made by the Government in all provinces for truly laying the foundations of local self-government, I cannot help regretting that the Resolution of the Government of India of last summer does not go far enough or even as far as Lord Ripon's Resolution of 1882 in the

direction of recommending less official control and greater extension of the elective principle, both as to members and chairmen of Rural and District Boards. Let not our rulers forget that "self-government implies the right to go wrong, and it is nobler for a nation as for a man to struggle towards excellence with its own natural force and vitality, however blindly and vainly, than to live in irreproachable decency under expert guidance from without."

It is not possible for us any more now than it was for Lord Ripon in 1882 to lay down any hard and fast rules which shall be of universal application in a country so vast and in its local circumstances so varied as British India. All we can do is to ask that the principles laid down by Lord Ripon should be generously given effect to, viz., distinct funds with distinct duties, not too large administrative areas, more and more of elections both of members and chairmen, and less and less of official control from within. From our side, schemes for different provinces have been put forward from 1870 downwards. I will mention only those of Mr. Malabari, Mr. R. C. Dutt and Mr. Gokhale. Schemes have

also been prepared from the official side in almost all the different provinces—Bengal, Bombay, Madras, the U. P., the Punjab and the Central Provinces. It ought not to be difficult to make an effective advance at once or an adjustment of these different schemes—and, if it is made in the right spirit, I feel confident that the ultimate success of local self-government in India is absolutely certain.

It is for us to co-operate whole-heartedly with the officials for the success of the different measures of local self-government which are already being undertaken in the different provinces. Let us not assume, as we are sometimes inclined to do, that the civilians will be loth to part with the powers which they have hitherto possessed. Let us in justice to the Indian Civil Service remember that the members of that distinguished body have never spared themselves in the service of India. Let me also implore my friends in the Indian Civil Service not to commit the mistake of looking upon the educated Indian as out of touch with his less favoured countrymen or trying to keep the latter down for his own personal profit and advancement.

Let us look upon each other as willing and necessary co-adjutors for the advancement of India in every department. Let us not rail at the mote in our brother's eye without considering the beam that is in our own. Let neither of us indulge in prejudice or fretfulness but work in friendly co-operation for the progress and prosperity of the teeming million of India.

DEVELOPMENT OF OUR COMMERCE,
INDUSTRIES AND AGRICULTURE.

Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to whether India is growing richer or poorer under British Rule, there is none with regard to her extreme poverty. And there can never be political contentment without material prosperity shared by all classes of the people. And what the District Administration Committee of Bengal quotes with approval, as regards Bengal, that our industrial backwardness is a great political danger, applies in reality to the whole of India.

No one will be disposed to question the fact of this amazing backwardness. Rich in all the resources of nature, India continues to be the

poorest country in the civilised world. The result is that an unhealthy political activity has arisen among certain classes of the people. As the District Administration Committee of Bengal says : “ this unrest compels Government to take repressive measures—a regrettable necessity which makes all the more desirable the adoption of those remedial and beneficent measures which will afford the most certain cure of the worst evils of the situation while proving that Government is no less determined to create prosperity than to maintain order.”

What are these “ remedial measures ? ” Technical schools and even technological institutes are not enough. These have in all modern States generally followed and not preceded the development of industries and manufactures. The first step taken by Japan was to start factories, either financed by Government or with Government control and managed by experts from abroad. In India alone, with the exception of spasmodic efforts, the Government adheres to the exploded *laissez faire* doctrine that the development of commerce and industry are not within the province of the State.

It is high time that this policy were abandoned. The necessity of carrying on demonstration work in agriculture, the greatest industry of the country, on a commercial scale, is admitted by all, and it is only where this principle has been put into practice that agricultural improvements have been taken up by the people. Similar results will follow if the same policy is pursued with regard to other industries and manufactures. They have followed whenever such experiments have been undertaken by the Government, as in the case of aluminium and chrome-tanning in Madras.

The time is singularly opportune. The War has put an end to the enormous imports of German and Austrian goods, and Japan is already making great efforts to capture the trade which by right ought to be ours.

I have neither the knowledge nor the capacity to go into details, and I rejoice that the experts sitting at the Congress of Indian Commerce will be able to point out specific ways and means by which the Government can assist us in this respect. But I will venture to say that the solution of the problem can no longer be safely

postponed. And it will test, as no other question has done, the altruism of English statesmanship, for in promoting and protecting Indian industries it may become necessary to sacrifice the interests even of English manufacturers.

A PROGRAMME OF SELF-HELP.

Hitherto I have been dealing with measures that can be undertaken only by the Government, and in doing so I incidentally mentioned the various ways in which we ourselves must act and move forward. Indeed, the field for such work is so vast as to render it impossible of definition. Primary education, improvement of agriculture and industrial expansion, improvement of rural as well as urban sanitation—there is work enough and to spare for every one of us. And how much could we not do by our own efforts, if only we cared to organise ourselves. I venture to suggest that we should lay down a constructive and continuous programme of work in all these directions as a part of our Congress activities, and that Provincial and District Committees all over the country should occupy

themselves throughout the year in some one or more of these manifold directions, so as to show the achievement of some result, however small, at the end of each year. For instance, while waiting for the establishment of a system of free and compulsory primary education, let each District branch of the Provincial Congress Committees be able to show that they have either directly or indirectly contributed to the establishment of ten, or even five, primary schools in their district during one year. Similarly, we might very usefully and profitably extend our activity in supplementing the work of the District, Local and Taluqa Boards, and in spreading among our rural population some elementary knowledge of hygiene and sanitation and in organising relief for local and provincial distress, if and when need be.

For this kind of self-help, the first requisite is to raise funds for the propaganda. Are we willing to do so? I confess to a feeling of diffidence, for though friends and leaders, like A. O. Hume, have repeatedly asked us to make permanent provision for the work of the Congress, both here and in England, their advice

seems to have fallen on absolutely deaf ears. Sir S. Iyer suggested last year that a body of Congress supporters should be brought into existence, each member thereof paying a subscription say of Rs. 25 per annum. He very modestly presumed that it would not be difficult to find in each province a few hundred of such subscribers, and he suggested that the funds so raised should be held and administered by trustees duly appointed, who should further be clothed with a corporate character by registration under the law so as to make them really competent to receive and hold for the Congress donations and endowments, which he hoped would not be long in coming. Let us at this Congress wipe out the reproach that moderate Indian opinion only devotes a few days public business in order to have the right during the rest of the year not to think more about it. Let us engrave in our hearts the advice which Mr. Hume gave us in 1904 when he said : "as for yourselves, stop foolish quarrels and depressing rivalries, substitute close and loyal co-operation and reasoned and constant action, give freely your time, your money and your hearts; speak

little and do much." Let us begin to deal with the concrete problems of civic life on the basis of ascertained and accepted facts, and in order that our institution may be a living actuality, let us begin by collecting first the funds which are indispensable for the carrying on of our work. It is my hope that this Congress may be a fertilising stream of steady effort fed by the spirit of service and sacrifice and spreading far and wide the blessings of peace and prosperity. If in speaking to you to-day—and I have spoken freely and frankly—I have succeeded in the smallest possible measure in advancing the object of the Indian National Congress and in appealing successfully to the better mind both of England and India, I shall consider my humble labours to have been more than amply recompensed.

OUR FUTURE.

And now, brother delegates, I have placed before you, to the best of my light, what the Government should do for us and what we should do for ourselves, so that we may have an India of the future answering our ideal, satis-

fying our aspirations, and rising to the height of our noblest emotions.

And towards this end the war is rapidly helping us onward. In the midst of the carnage and massacre, there is being accomplished the destruction of much that is evil and there is the budding forth of much that will abide. False pride and aloofness are giving place to union and genuine co-operation between those whom nothing before now seemed able to draw together. Protestant and Catholic, Churchman and Dissenter, Hindu and Moslem, Englishman and Indian, Colonial and coloured peoples are offering their daily worship not in separate sanctuaries but under the improvised shelter of the trench or the barn, animated by the same faith and trusting in the same inspiration. A new spirit of self-sacrifice, a new interest in the weak and the suffering, is abroad: self-indulgence is giving place to self-sacrifice and throughout the British Empire there is a prevailing atmosphere of goodwill and mutual service and esteem. It seems to me that, under the benign dispensation of an inscrutable Providence, we shall emerge into a new era of peace

and goodwill, and our beloved Motherland will occupy an honoured place in the Empire with which her fortunes are indissolubly linked, and we shall be the free and equal citizens of that great Empire, bearing its burdens, sharing its responsibilities and participating in its heritage of freedom and glory as comrades and brethren.





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